

AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY POSITION

Introduction

Affordable housing is crucial for Winnipeg's economic growth, as it is in cities across the globe. Although prices in Winnipeg are lower than in cities like Toronto or Vancouver, affordability remains a significant concern for those entering the housing market – namely young people and newcomers. For example, recent research has found 42% of 18- to 24-year-olds are considering moving provinces because of housing costs (*Angus Reid Institute, 2024*). Additionally, the top economic factor for youth considering a move to a new province or community are housing costs and low tax rates (*Canada West Foundation, 2024*). This data illustrates that the challenge of housing affordability not only harms local businesses by reducing workforce availability and consumer spending but also discourages investment by creating an unstable economic environment.

Access to affordable housing for all residents is a key indicator of Winnipeg's economic health. Without a sufficient supply of affordable housing, employers may face a competitive disadvantage, struggling to attract and retain workers. Addressing this challenge requires providing safe, decent housing while incorporating equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) principles to prioritize the needs of marginalized communities, including Indigenous Peoples, racialized groups, women, seniors, persons with disabilities, 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, and low-income households.

Our Vision

We envision Winnipeg as a city where diverse, vibrant neighborhoods provide an abundance of affordable housing, dynamic shopping opportunities, seamless travel, and fulfilling work options—all conveniently accessible within a short distance.

Achieving this vision requires a holistic approach to housing affordability, influenced by key factors such as:

- Government regulation
- Available land
- Labor and material costs

- Capital expenses
- Perceptions of affordable housing
- Community Focus

The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce recommends

City of Winnipeg

1. Streamline the Development Process
 - **Housing Accelerator Fund:** We strongly urge the city use the HAF to invest in technology and systems to accelerate the residential development permits and approval process, including doing a major update of zoning bylaws to ensure they align with *OurWinnipeg 2045* and *Complete Communities Direction Strategy 2.0*.
 - **Promote Customer-Centric, Outcome-Focused Culture:** Foster a reputation that City processes are customer-centric, simple and accessible through measurement of outcomes and speed to outcomes, ensuring that investment from all sectors can navigate the process smoothly, based on consistency of interpretation and application.
 - **Reduce Financial Barriers:** Waive building fees across the city on affordable, student, mixed use, sustainable and heritage developments to reduce overall project costs.
2. Encourage Infill
 - **Eliminate parking minimums:** Outside of downtown, zoning laws require most new residential and commercial developments to create a minimum number of new parking spots per unit or per square foot of space. A growing number of North American cities – including Toronto, Edmonton and Calgary - have eliminated parking minimums allowing developers to decide how many parking spaces they require, if any.
 - **Promote Density:** Continue to implement the residential infill guidelines adopted by City Council in 2021 and develop dense housing near major transit routes. This will provide residents with enhanced mobility throughout the city while making our city more attractive to potential new residents.
 - **Critical Infrastructure:** Collaborate to fund and enhance city infrastructure; notably the North End Water Pollution Control Centre, ensuring it can effectively support the construction of new housing to meet growing demand.

Province of Manitoba

3. Enhance Supply Chain Resilience Through Workforce Development

- **Increase the Apprenticeship Ratio:** Increase the Red Seal Trade ratio of journeyperson to apprentice, currently set at 1:1, to 1:2 to properly incorporate and create meaningful opportunities for the influx of entrants into the skilled trades and meet construction needs. Manitoba would join Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland & Labrador who all have a 1:2 ratio.
- **Streamline Credential Recognition:** Work alongside the federal government and industry to remove barriers to foreign credential recognition so Manitoba employers can access a deep pool of talent of new Canadians.
- **Increase Access to Skilled Trade Training:** Implement targeted initiatives and programs to promote skilled trades careers as viable employment options for women, Indigenous peoples, and other underrepresented groups.

4. Building Inclusive Community

- **Invest in Social Supports:** Promote housing models that address the needs of vulnerable populations, including non-profit and cooperative housing. Enhance access to social supports, childcare, and transportation to ensure inclusive community development.

Government of Canada

5. Support Affordable and Sustainable Communities

- **Promote Sustainable Building Codes:** Collaborate with all levels of government to harmonize building codes and other policy tools to promote mixed-use, climate-resilient, and net-zero housing options.
- **Incentivize Affordable Housing Development:** Provide low-interest loans to developers who build or convert properties into affordable housing.

Business Community

6. Innovation

- **Partner with Post-secondary Institutions:** Invest in research and development to create new technologies, materials, and building methods that improve affordability, sustainability, and energy efficiency.

Appendix A

Recommendation	City of Winnipeg	Province of Manitoba	Government of Canada	Business Community
1. Streamlining the Development Process	Lead	Support	Support	Support
2. Encourage Infill	Lead	Support	Support	Support
3. Enhance Supply Chain Resilience Through Workforce Development	Support	Lead	Support	Support
4. Community	Co-Lead	Lead	Support	Support
5. Support Healthy Communities	Co-Lead	Co-Lead	Lead	Support
6. Innovation	Support	Co-Lead	Support	Lead

Appendix B

Recommendation	Title	Timing
Rec 1	Take Full Advantage of the Housing Accelerator Fund	<i>Immediate (0-12 months)</i>
	Encourage Transparency and Accountability	<i>Short Term (1-3 years)</i>
	Reduce Financial Barriers	<i>Short Term (1-3 years)</i>

Rec 2	Eliminate parking minimums	<i>Immediate (0-12 months)</i>
	Promote Density	<i>Mid-Range (3-5 years)</i>
	Critical Infrastructure	<i>Short Term (1-3 years)</i>
Rec 3	Increase the Apprenticeship Ratio	<i>Immediate (0-12 months)</i>
	Streamline Credential Recognition	<i>Short Term (1-3 years)</i>
	Increase Access to Skilled Trade Training	<i>Short Term (1-3 years)</i>
Rec 4	Invest in Social Supports	<i>Mid-Range (3-5 years)</i>
Rec 5	Promote Sustainable Building Codes	<i>Mid-Range (3-5 years)</i>
	Incentivize Affordable Housing Development	<i>Short Term (1-3 years)</i>
Rec 6	Partner with Post-secondary Institutions:	<i>Mid-Range (3-5 years)</i>